

VA FUNDING HONORS COMMITMENT TO VETERANS

(Mr. ALTMIRE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, after years of neglect, this House is finally going to take up a VA funding bill that honors our commitment to our Nation's veterans. In contrast to the chronic underfunding that the VA has seen in recent years, this bill that we are going to talk about today has the largest increase in VA health care spending in the 77-year history of the program.

And for the first time, this bill exceeds the recommended funding level of the service organizations, the American Legion and the VFW.

Democrats continue to demonstrate our commitment that no group should stand ahead of our Nation's veterans when it comes time to make Federal funding decisions. This bill will help us clear up the 400,000-case backlog at the VA. It is going to help us avoid issues like what happened at Walter Reed, and it will give our veterans the care that they earned and the care that they deserve.

HONORING LIEUTENANT COLONEL GEORGE BROWN

(Mr. WELLER of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the life of Lieutenant Colonel George Brown of Morris, Illinois, a true American patriot. Lieutenant Colonel Brown passed away at the age of 86 in his home on June 6, 2007, on the 63rd anniversary of D-Day. He served in the U.S. Army from 1942–1964, and was a World War II veteran who also served in Korea. During his service, he received a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star.

A leader in his community, Lieutenant Colonel Brown spent many years as a well-respected member of the Grundy County Board where he was known to give full dedication to his job and cared about conservation and preservation issues.

Additionally, Lieutenant Colonel Brown educated children in our community about Native Americans by portraying Chief Shabbona, the leader of the Pottawatomie Indian tribe during the Black Hawk War, who is also buried in Morris, Illinois. He instructed these children that "we are symbols of current and past history, and we represent father, grandfather, brother and the authority figure, and they expect us to do the right thing."

Lieutenant Colonel Brown is remembered as a man of conviction and a pillar in our community, and I am proud to honor him today.

HISTORIC INCREASES IN VETERANS FUNDING

(Mr. SPACE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SPACE. Mr. Speaker, today this House will debate legislation that will help us fulfill our commitment to this Nation's service men and women, their families and our veterans. The Military Construction bill that comes to the floor today was unanimously approved out of the House Appropriations Committee last week. Not one Democrat or Republican opposed the measure.

That is because it provides the largest increase in funding for veterans health care in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration and includes other historic funding increases designed to meet the changing need of our Armed Forces.

Mr. Speaker, this bill unanimously passed out of the Appropriations Committee for a reason: it is a good bill and deserves the support of every Member of this House.

UPHOLD BORDER SECURITY FUNDS

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, last year House Republicans acted to stop the flow of illegal aliens into our country by passing five bills specifically addressing the current border crisis. Among these bills was the Secure Fence Act, a bill that among other things authorized more than 700 miles of two-layered reinforced fencing along the southwest border.

Sadly, this week, as the House considers the Democrat Homeland Security Appropriations bill, we find that included in this legislation is a provision allowing localities to "shut off" funding for this vital border fence.

As the debate regarding our immigration system continues to wage on, one thing we know for certain is that controlling our borders should come first to any effort we undertake. We welcome legal immigrants who follow the rule of law. But it is unfortunate Democrats are backtracking on the progress we have made. It is time to fund the fence.

In conclusion, God bless our troops and we will never forget September 11.

HISTORIC INCREASES IN VETERANS FUNDING

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, for far too long our veterans have been left behind. In fact, last year the Republican Congress and the Bush administration proposed cutting fund-

ing for the operation and maintenance of veterans' medical facilities by \$464 million. Earlier this year, we saw the effects of these budget cuts manifested in the conditions of Walter Reed Hospital and other VA hospitals across the country.

Fortunately, this new Democratic Congress has a different set of priorities. We allocate the largest increase in funding for veterans health care in history, and we do it in a fiscally responsible way that does not produce budget deficits down the line.

The 2008 MILCON and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill includes \$70 million more than the President requested for veterans substance abuse programs, \$69 million more than he requested for medical and prosthetic research, and \$127 million more to address the 400,000-deep backlog of veterans benefits claims.

Mr. Speaker, we are finally keeping our promise to our veterans, not only to the veterans serving in Iraq and Afghanistan today, but all veterans.

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EARMARK REFORM

(Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, during the 109th Congress, Republicans enacted historic earmarking reforms that allowed Members to challenge and debate wasteful earmarks contained in spending bills on the House floor. This was a good step towards increased accountability and transparency in the earmarking process.

Last fall, Democrats campaigned on a pledge to make this the most ethical Congress in history. But, as they headed into their first appropriations season, we're confronted with the reality of their reforms. It seems that instead of increasing sunshine on how Congress is spending the American people's money, they prefer to create massive secret funds for earmarks that will be inserted into the bill after the votes have been taken on legislation.

And what is perhaps most egregious is the fact that they won't even let these earmarks, which are paid for with the American people's hard-earned tax dollars, be debated in the people's House.

This is not the most ethical Congress in history. This is a sham.

DEMOCRATS HAVE DIFFERENT FISCAL PRIORITIES THAN PRESIDENT BUSH AND SOME REPUBLICANS

(Ms. SHEA-PORTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Mr. Speaker, President Bush claims there are important differences between Democrats